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LETTER DATED 7 APRIL 1997 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF UGANDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you a statement issued at the end of the Quadrilateral talks between the Foreign Ministers of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Uganda and Malawi and the First Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Sudan, held at Entebbe, Uganda, from 13 to 15 March 1997.

I shall be grateful if you will have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Professor SEMAKULA KIWANUKA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Statement issued at the end of the Quadrilateral Talks between the Foreign Ministers of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Uganda and Malawi and the First Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Sudan, held at Entebbe, Uganda from 13 to 15 March 1997

In pursuance of the efforts made to bring about peace and stability between the Republic of Uganda and the Republic of the Sudan, Uganda's First Deputy Prime Minister/Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Eriya Kategaya, hosted the meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Hon. Ali Akabar Velayati, the Hon. A. G. Nga Mtafu of the Republic of Malawi and Mr. Ali Animeri, the First Under-Secretary in the Sudanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The meeting, chaired by Mr. Velayati, reviewed and reassessed the situation regarding the normalization of relations between the Sudan and Uganda since the last meeting held at Tehran from 3-4 November 1996 and focused, inter alia, on the establishment of the verification team as contained in the Khartoum Agreement of 9 September 1996 (S/1996/740). It was regrettable that this particular meeting ended without any agreement as concerns were expressed by Uganda on the failure to implement the provisions of the Khartoum Agreement since it was signed. Uganda believes that more positive practical steps need to be taken by the Sudan for the full implementation of the Agreement.

Uganda has always subscribed to good-neighbourliness and in this regard has spared no efforts in advancing this course with its neighbour, the Sudan, as demonstrated by its participation in all mediation efforts held in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, South Africa, Austria and recently in Rome at the highest level; and at the ministerial level in Tripoli, Malawi, Khartoum, Tehran, and now at Entebbe.

The Entebbe talks were the latest in a series of initiatives on relations between Uganda and the Sudan taken by various countries. At the highest level, talks have been held in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malawi, South Africa, Austria and recently in Rome and at the ministerial level in Tripoli, Khartoum, New York and Tehran.

In Khartoum, under the mediation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, an Agreement on the settlement of disputes and the normalization of relations between the Republic of Uganda and the Republic of Sudan was signed in September 1996. The major areas covered in the Agreement were the following:

(i) To cease immediately all campaigns of official negative propaganda against each other, bilaterally or at any other forum;

(ii) To cease to provide territory to be used by belligerent forces against each other's country;

(iii) To refrain from providing support directly or indirectly to belligerent forces opposed to each other's Government;

(iv) To disarm and dismantle bases and logistics centres of belligerent groups of either of the two countries in the territory of the other;

(v) To move all belligerent groups of either of the two countries away from the common border to a distance not less than one hundred kilometres from the common borders;

(vi) That each country should enhance and facilitate the voluntary return of refugees;

(vii) To set up a verification team comprising representatives of the two sides, the Islamic Republic of Iran and if, they accepted, Malawi and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

Soon after the Khartoum Agreement had been signed, the Sudan carried out attacks and bombing on Uganda territory as follows:

(i) On 10 October 1996, rebels of the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) who had crossed from their bases in the Sudan attacked St. Mary's Aboke in Apac and abducted 149 students. To date, 24 girls still remain in captivity, as mentioned earlier;

(ii) On 12 October 1996 rebels of the West Nile Bank Front (WNBF) estimated at about 120 and commanded by "Captain" Morosprang from their base in Kaya in the Sudan, moved through Zaire and entered Uganda through Simbiri on the north-eastern border of Zaire with Uganda. Later, the rebels attacked the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) position at Maracha. The group was badly beaten and retreated back into Zaire;

(iii) On 25 October 1996, WNBF rebels planted a mine on the Koboko-Arua road which hit the lorry of a non-governmental organization (NGO) at Nyori. They also sprang from their bases in Kaya, crossed into Uganda and attacked the Lefuli refugee camp and set ablaze all the houses in the trading centre;

(iv) On 31 October 1996, WNBF rebels attempted to blow up the Inve bridge on the Arua-Koboko road but the attempt was foiled by UPDF;

(v) On 8 November 1996, a lorry with registration No. UPX 057 was hit by a landmine planted by WNBF at the Okoro trading centre;

(vi) On 9 November 1996, an estimated 250 LRA rebels crossed from Arua in the Sudan led by "Brigadier" Omona into Uganda. The group had a lot of ammunition. Omona fled back to the Sudan on 26 January 1997;

(vii) On 24 January 1997, WNBF rebels estimated at about 300, with the backing of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), sprang from their base at Yondi near Kaya in the Sudan and attacked Medigo Parish in Aringa County, Arua District. Between 31 January and 3 February 1997,

splinter groups attacked and looted Lodongo Catholic Mission in separate raids.

Since October 1996, SAF fighter planes have violated Uganda's airspace nine times. During this period SAF fighters bombed Moyo. An Iranian military investigation team led by the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Hussein Sheikhul Islam, visited the site and a report is still awaited. The most recent violation was 13 February 1997, when two SAF fighter planes, one MIG and an Antanov, violated Uganda's airspace in Moyo. They dropped eight bombs near the UPDF barracks but missed their target. Five of them exploded. Two civilians were injured and one died in the attack.

On the same day, SAF aircraft, an Antanov, violated Uganda's airspace in Arua District. It dropped three 200 kg bombs at Atolo village in Oluvu Division, Maracha Country, Arua District, on the Uganda-Zaire border. The attack left behind a deep crater. Four civilians were seriously wounded.

Subsequent to the Khartoum Agreement, a Ministerial Meeting was held at Tehran on 3 and 4 November 1996, ostensibly aimed at having the Agreement on establishment of a verification team signed by the Foreign Ministers. In Tehran, the Uganda delegation, which was again led by the First Deputy Prime Minister/Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Eriya Kategaya, made it clear that even after the signing of the Khartoum Agreement that there had not been any public gesture to show that the Sudan was serious about implementing the provisions of the Khartoum Agreement. Until this was done, Uganda could not sign the Verification Team Agreement.

As far as Uganda is concerned, still at issue is the question of the Sudan's sincerity and commitment to normalize relations and the need to evince the acts demonstrating this sincerity and commitment, especially by meeting the three conditions in the first instance. What is very clear is that the Sudan is eager to have the Verification Team Agreement signed because it would give them a foothold in Uganda. The Islamic Republic of Iran, for its part, is also keen for the Verification Team Agreement to be signed as this would appear to have resulted from its efforts to normalize relations between the Sudan and Uganda.

However, let it be known to both the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Sudan that the signing of the Verification Team Agreement will not end the war in the Sudan. The Sudanese Government believes that it can intimidate Uganda out of sympathizing (but not supporting) with the cause of southern Sudan by unleashing Kony criminals on an innocent civilian population in northern Uganda. Such a policy will only succeed in killing some people and damaging the economy but will not stop the people of southern Sudan from regaining their full and equal rights.

Sudan must display visible commitments in the Khartoum Agreement and make sincere efforts towards the normalization of our relations. To date no such commitment or sincerity has been demonstrated; instead the Sudan has downgraded its level of representation at the Entebbe meeting and refused to allow the mention in the communiqué of the abduction of girls whose parents and headmistress testified before the Foreign Ministers of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Malawi and the First Under-Secretary of Sudan when they met the

President. Uganda still believes that the conflict has to be solved, and is open to further talks whenever the Sudan is ready and can show seriousness and commitment towards resolution of the problem.

The Sudan's lack of commitment to the resolution of the problem was once again demonstrated by the fact that while these talks were taking place, the Permanent Representative of Sudan to the United Nations on 13 March 1997 addressed a letter to the President of the Security Council (S/1997/223) in which he made calumnious and baseless allegations against Uganda.

The delegation later met President Museveni, who reaffirmed Uganda's commitment to its policy of good-neighbourliness but expressed concern over the continued violation by the Sudan of the provisions of the Khartoum Agreement of 9 September 1996.

Prior to the address of President Museveni, the Foreign Ministers of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Malawi and the First Under-Secretary of the Sudan listened to the testimonies of the parents and the headmistress of the 24 girls from St. Mary's Aboke in Apac who are still held captive in Aruu in the Sudan and sought their intervention to ensure their release and safe return. This is in addition to an appeal already published by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) regarding the abductions in camps in the Sudan, based on testimonies from 15 children who escaped from the abductors.